

Sendik's stores to grind out energy from food waste

By Thomas Content of the Journal Sentinel

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In a bid to keep more food waste out of landfills, Sendik's is installing grinding systems from [InSinkerator that will help turn scraps into energy](#).

The local grocery store chain will add Grind2Energy systems at 11 of its 12 local stores as well as its distribution center in a program announced Thursday.

Sendik's piloted the project at its Mequon store starting last year and then decided to expand it. As a result of the pilot, the Mequon store sends one truckload of waste to the landfill each month, down from eight.

Installation of the holding tanks and other equipment was taking place Thursday at the Sendik's Whitefish Bay store, with all of the 11 stores that will be using the system set to be converted by the end of the month, said Nick Bandoch, Sendik's spokesman.

Sendik's has been shipping food scraps to be used as compost in recent years, but the new systems is able to accommodate food waste beyond produce. That includes grease from cooking meat and leftover items from Sendik's delis that can't be composted, according to Bandoch.

The ground and liquefied food waste stored in tanks at each store is then trucked to the Potawatomi Hotel & Casino complex, where the waste-to-energy project the tribe opened in 2013 stands just west of the hotel on Canal St.

Sendik's says it's the first grocer in Wisconsin to participate in a food waste-to-energy program.

Some chains elsewhere are moving even further, as more states ban organic waste from landfills. In Massachusetts, the grocery chain Stop & Shop is building its own power plant to turn food waste into electricity.

Massachusetts is banning organic waste from landfills, and by next summer, landfill bans affecting commercial food businesses will be in effect in six states, according to a presentation by InSinkErator's parent company, Emerson, earlier this year.

At Sendik's, the company expects to eliminate the equivalent of 4.7 million car miles worth of greenhouse gas emissions through the waste to energy process. The

food waste is expected to generate enough natural gas to heat 1,500 homes for a month, and create more than 407,000 pounds of fertilizer.

The Milwaukee food waste initiative was announced a day after U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a goal to cut the amount of food that Americans waste by 50% by 2030.

"The United States enjoys the most productive and abundant food supply on Earth, so too much of this food goes to waste," Vilsack said Wednesday in New York City, where he was joined by food-industry representatives and officials from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that Americans waste 133 billion pounds of food every year, or 31% of their overall food supply.

EPA officials said the massive waste is a problem not just because the food could feed the hungry but also because it ends up in landfills and affects the environment.

"Twenty-one percent of all the waste in landfills is food," EPA Deputy Administrator Stan Meiburg said. "Once it's there, it produces methane, which is a greenhouse gas."

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.



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Thomas Content covers energy, clean technology and sustainable business. A series he co-wrote on energy and climate change won top honors in 2008 from the National Press Foundation.

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